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SUBJECT: SBA AND OMANI SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE DIRECTORATE AGREE ON DRAFT MOU; SUPPORTS POTUS CAIRO SPEECH

¶1. (SBU) A delegation of three Small Business Administration officials visited Oman as part of the MEPI-funded Interagency Agreement between State and the Office of International Trade in the SBA. The purpose of the delegation's visit was to determine whether Oman would be a suitable country for the MEPI Small Business Initiative for Women Program (SBA Women's Program).

¶2. (SBU) The delegation met with officials at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, including the head of the Small and Medium Enterprise Directorate (SME Directorate), the Public Authority for Crafts Industry, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The delegation also met with male and female small business owners, women's business groups, and organizations providing entrepreneurial training.

¶3. (SBU) The delegation found the SME Directorate to be particularly keen on the SBA Women's Program. The SBA delegation completed a draft Memorandum of Understanding, of which both the delegation and the head of the SME Directorate approve. The draft MOU will be submitted to the Office of the Legal Advisor (Septel) and the appropriate legal authorities in Oman. The delegation hopes to unveil the SBA Women's Program in Oman at the Global Summit on Entrepreneurship to be held in Washington in March.

¶4. (SBU) According to the draft MOU, the SBA Women's Program in Oman seeks to inter alia: develop a comprehensive data collection and analysis system on Omani SMEs; provide information on effective models and consultation for the structuring and operation of SME incubation facilities in Oman; organize informational observer programs for Omani SMEs and government officials in the U.S.; and exchange information on effective and successful models for women SME support programs. The program strongly supports the President's objectives for the region as set out in his Cairo speech.
Schmierer